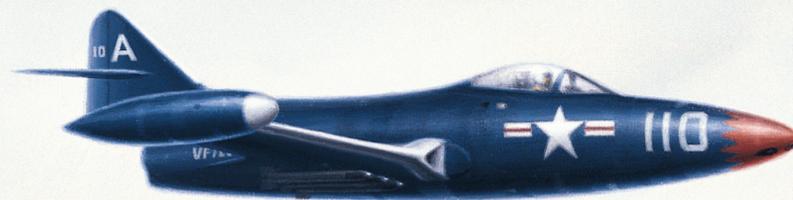




F4U-5N Corsair



F2H-2P Banshee



F9F-2 Panther



AD-4 Skyraider

## NAVAL AVIATION News

# NAVY WARBIRODS IN KOREA

When the Korean War began in 1950, Naval Aviation was in transition. Evolving jet-era technology was not fully integrated and new operational tactics were not completely developed. The result was a composite force of both jet and propeller-driven planes with profoundly different requirements and applications. Represented here are some of the Navy's primary tactical aircraft of the Korean War, illustrating the transition from the WW II-era combat force into the jet age.

### AD (later A-1) Skyraider

Ordered by the Navy in 1944 as the XBT2D-1, and later redesignated, the AD became the primary carrier-based dive-bomber. Officially named *Skyraider*, it also earned other appellations, including "Able Dog" and "Spad." Successive versions emerged, and by the start of the Korean War the aircraft was a strong asset in the Navy's arsenal. The plane was noted for its ability to carry a payload almost equal to its own weight. In Korea, the AD gained fame for interdiction attacks and close air support. In fact, *Skyraiders* led the very first U.S. strike against the North Korean capital of Pyongyang in July 1950. Flying from *Valley Forge* (CV 45), and accompanied by F4U *Corsair* fighters and F9F *Panther* jets, 16 *Skyraiders* made a successful bombing run, taking out numerous enemy planes still on the ground, destroying their hangars and vaporizing a nearby fuel farm. The *Skyraider's* extensive flight range and ability to stay on station made it a terror to the enemy and a welcome sight to allied ground troops. The plane also disrupted enemy supply lines, including sealing up railroad tunnels in daring low-level attacks. Production ceased in 1957, but the *Skyraider's* usefulness did not end. Its versatility led to service in Vietnam, and A-1s ultimately remained in the Navy's inventory until 1971, serving the U.S. Air Force even later.

### F4U Corsair

Ordered by the Navy as a single-engine, carrier-based fighter in 1938, the plane's innovative bent-wing design stood out among aircraft of its era. Dubbed the *Corsair*, the F4U was in full production by 1942, gaining prominence in WW II while serving in nearly every Pacific theater campaign with both Navy and Marine squadrons. Improved versions were developed in the postwar years, but the jet age relegated *Corsairs* to low-altitude attack plane duty. This role was ideally suited for them and during the Korean War, carrier-based *Corsairs* from *Valley Forge* (CV 45) took part in the initial U.S. raid against Pyongyang. In the first 10 months of the war, *Corsairs* accounted for 82 percent of all close air support missions flown by both Navy and Marine pilots. The *Corsair's* ability to carry almost 5,000 pounds of ordnance and stay on target for extended periods made it invaluable to the war

effort. Both carrier-based and land-based night fighter versions (F4U-5Ns) were flown by Navy and Marine night fighter units. The final *Corsair* was delivered to the Navy in 1953, and the model remained in use until 1955. During its heyday, the *Corsair* held the distinction of being the longest serving production fighter plane in Navy history.

### F9F Panther

The F9F *Panther* has a proud history. Developed in the late 1940s, the *Panther* entered service in 1949 and was the first jet-powered plane to see widespread use with both the Navy and Marine Corps. It was the first Navy jet to shoot down an enemy aircraft, as well as the first jet aircraft to be used by the Navy's flight demonstration team. The *Blue Angels*, formed in 1946, were briefly converted into a combat unit and flew missions in Korea using the F9F shortly after adopting the jet in 1950. *Panthers* were immortalized for the general public in the 1954 film *The Bridges at Toko-ri*. The F9F was the Navy's primary carrier-based jet fighter during the Korean War and took part in the initial air raids over Pyongyang in July 1950. In that attack, Naval Aviators Lieutenant (jg) Leonard H. Plog and Ensign Eldon W. Brown scored the first aerial victories of the war in their *Panther* jets by each downing a YAK-9. The early F9F-2 versions of the *Panther* used in Korea were succeeded by F9F-5s with higher thrust J48 engines, flown by fighter squadrons as late as 1958.

### F2H Banshee

The early F2H *Banshees*, known as "Banjos," served with both Navy and Marine squadrons in Korea. Arising from post-WW II development efforts, the F2H entered service in 1949 as a carrier-based fighter-bomber. While the aircraft was successful in this role during the Korean War, the *Banshee's* speed and high-altitude capability prompted the Navy to adapt the F2H for photoreconnaissance work. It was in this capacity that *Banshees* made their most significant contribution to the war. F2H-2s and later versions served with Navy and Marine Corps reserve units until the early 1960s.

Note: Aircraft specifications were obtained from Standard Aircraft Characteristics charts.

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### AD-4

Manufacturer: Douglas  
Wingspan: 50 ft  
Service Ceiling: 25,300 ft  
Length: 39 ft 3 in  
Height: 15 ft 8 in  
Weight: 11,712 lbs (empty)  
Engine: Wright R-3350-26WA  
Max. Speed: 303 kts

### F4U-5N

Manufacturer: Chance Vought  
Wingspan: 41 ft  
Service Ceiling: 43,000 ft  
Length: 34 ft  
Height: 14 ft 9 in  
Weight: 10,532 lbs (empty)  
Engine: Pratt & Whitney R-2800-32W  
Max. Speed: 384 kts

### F9F-2

Manufacturer: Grumman  
Wingspan: 38 ft  
Service Ceiling: 44,600 ft  
Length: 37 ft 3 in  
Height: 11 ft 4 in  
Weight: 9,303 lbs (empty)  
Engine: Pratt & Whitney J42-P-8  
Max. Speed: 500 kts

### F2H-2P

Manufacturer: McDonnell  
Wingspan: 41 ft 9 in  
Service Ceiling: 49,100 ft  
Length: 42 ft 10 in  
Height: 14 ft 6 in  
Weight: 11,268 lbs (empty)  
Engines: Two Westinghouse J34-WE-34  
Max. Speed: 503 kts